Charmander and Gloom

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Summary: After his best friend accidentally evolves, Charmander faces an important decision...

Charmander and Gloom

A young Oddish scrambled out of a bush to meet the trainer on the path. Unaware of the danger of being caught, she stayed out in the open and looked up curiously.

The trainer's name was Ryan and he had just begun his PokÃ¨mon journey two days ago. So far, his team consisted of Charmander, Pidgey, and Caterpie.

"An Oddish is just what I need," he realized. "All my other PokÃ¨mon have a weakness against water." On the other hand, all his PokÃ¨mon had some advantage over Oddish. Without thinking, he tossed a PokÃ¨ Ball at the little plant PokÃ¨mon, and a red beam of light sucked it into the ball.

Inside the PokÃ¨ Ball, Oddish was terrified and confused. She hated confined spaces and struggled to get out. After a few seconds of struggling, the PokÃ¨ Ball popped open.

"Great, I wasted PokÃ¨ Ball! Go Charmander!"

"Char char!"

"Charmander, Ember it!"

But before Charmander could attack, Oddish leapt behind it and began absorbing its energy. Charmander spun around and used its tail to burn Oddish.

"Oddish!" it cried out. The only move it knew was Absorb, so it hung on and absorbed with all its might.

"Charmander, Tackle!"

Charmander whipped its tail around and butted Oddish into the grass. Oddish took this opportunity to take off through the woods.

"Charmander, return! Pidgey, attack it from the air!"

Pidgey lifted off, eyes scanning the tall grass for any sign of Oddish. Unfortunately, Oddish's little blue body prevented it from hiding very well. As soon as Pidgey discovered her, she dived from the air and stabbed the little plant with her beak.

"Oddish!" It flew through the air and bounced into some bushes.

"Pidgey, Gust attack!" Pidgey beat its wings hard, and soon the Oddish came tumbling out of the bush and back onto the road. As the bird swept in to give it a good pecking, Oddish rolled out of the way and absorbed its energy. It didn't work very well, but it was enough to push Pidgey onto the ground. As Oddish began another dash towards the tall grass, it was suddenly struck with huge amounts of white icky goo.

"Okay! Now Caterpie, Tackle!" Caterpie didn't have much of a tackle, and it almost got stuck in its own String Shot. "Uh, never mind. Just spray some more Sting Shot and I'll try to capture it." Caterpie obeyed and sprayed String Shots until only Oddish's leaves could be seen. Ryan tossed another PokÃ¨ Ball, this time successfully capturing the Oddish.

"Yay, I got an ODDISH!" he yelled, striking a pose.

"Just what are you so happy about? I already caught a Pikachu!" It was his rival, Brian.

Ryan knew what this meant. Another battle. The last time he had battled Brian, Charmander had gotten hurt pretty badly.

"Just wait until I get my PokÃ¨mon healed," he said, heading towards Viridian City.

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"I already caught six PokÃ¨mon, and one of them evolved," Brian bragged.

"Just start the battle already," Ryan said, annoyed.

"Go Squirtle!"

"Go Oddish!"

"So you finally caught a grass PokÃ¨mon, eh?"

"What?! You even saw me capture it!"

"Uh, he he. Squirtle, Tail Whip!"

"Absorb!"

Oddish guessed what Ryan wanted it to do, so it jumped on top of Squirtle and began absorbing its energy.

"Squirtle..."

"Don't just stand there! Shake it off and give it a Tackle!"

Squirtle did just what he said, but it was still no match for a plant PokÃ¨mon.

"Squirtle, return! Go Rattata!"

"Oddish, absorb!"

"Use Quick Attack and then run!"

Rattata dashed in and out, hurting Oddish before it could get back with Absorb. Oddish was replaced with Pidgey.

"Go Spearow!"

Spearow was much more vicious than Pidgey. It dived under its Gust attacks and pecked at it until Pidgey dropped to the ground, bruised and beaten all over.

"Go Charmander! Ember attack!" Spearow couldn't get close without being burned by Charmander's tail. Once, it managed to knock it over with its wing and began pecking at it until Charmander swung its tail around and knocked it out.

"Go...Weedle!" Of course, Brian knew that there was a good chance that Caterpie would be last. But he had assumed that Ryan would return Charmander.

"Whatever happened to that Pikachu?" Ryan said. "Charmander, Growl and Tackle! Get close enough for an Ember attack!"

"Weedle, counter with String Shot!"

Within a few seconds, Charmander was pinned to the ground by the constant rain of String Shots. Whipping its tail around, it managed to burn off some of the goo and launch an Ember attack at Weedle, who rolled out of the way. Suddenly, the Weedle stood perfectly still, String Shots closing in around its body.

"No! Fight it, Weedle!" Weedle managed to stop and throw all the String Shots back at Charmander. As Charmander was struggling to get out, Weedle gave it a Poison Sting, which slowly drained Charmander's health until it fainted.

"What?! But fire PokÃ¨mon are supposed to be strong against bugs!"

"Ha ha, guess mine has more experience."

"We aren't finished yet! Go Caterpie! String Shot!"

"String Shot!" Brian called out at the same time.

The two String Shots combined into a big wad of sticky stuff that bounced around and rolled towards the trainers.

"Ahh! Get out of the way!" While they were distracted, Weedle came up behind Caterpie and gave it a few Poison Stings. Caterpie responded with a Tackle, but it was poisoned and weakening fast. By the time the trainers had gotten back to the battlefield, Caterpie was too weak to fight.

"Hey, you cheated!"

"Nope, Weedle was smart enough to beat your Caterpie. It's probably at level 8 by now."

"Stop bragging."

"I'm not bragging."

"Whatever. And you don't even have a Pikachu."

"I do too! Here it is!" A Pikachu popped out of its PokÃ¨ Ball and gave Ryan a Thundershock.

"Next time, I won't ask..."

* * *

Ryan caught a lot more PokÃ¨mon on his way to the PokÃ¨mon League, but his first four were his closest friends and personal favorites. They were the ones he trained most often and he usually kept one of them with him while he was travelling.

One day, Nurse Joy told him that his mother had called from Cerulean City.

"Uh, hi Mom."

"Hi, Ryan! Nice to see you again. Did you remember to..." After a while, his mother got to the point. "Anyway, I heard that there's a new show in town. Something involving a Dewgong. I want you to come right here from Cinnabar Island. Dewgongs are very rare, you know."

"Sure thing, Mom. When does the show start?"

"This weekend. Remember to put on clean clothing every day, okay Ryan?"

Ryan had already collected all eight necessary badges and was already on his way to the PokÃ¨mon League, which was holding its tournament in one month. He hadn't managed to train his PokÃ¨mon very much because the island was full of tourists.

"I know! I'll take my PokÃ¨mon to Cerulean City and battle along the way!"

* * *

"Go Marowak!"

"Go Pidgeot!"

"Marowak, Bonemerang!"

Pidgeot shot up a few feet and caught the Bonemerang in its talons before sending it flying back to Marowak! It was Mirror Move, one of Pidgeot's specialties.

"Whirlwind!" Pidgeot's wings beat furiously, blowing Marowak against a tree. "Now sweep in for a Wing Attack!"

"Counter with Bone Club!"

"Agility!"

Pidgeot gathered up speed and delivered a blow to Marowak's side, knocking it over. Marowak tried to hit it as it flew past, but it was just too fast.

"Focus Energy!" Marowak suddenly glowed a bright blue!

"Mirror Move!" Pidgeot did the same!

"Rage attack!" Marowak pounced on Pidgeot, but missed and landed on the ground. It threw another Bonemerang, which Pidgeot caught and threw back, hitting Marowak's skull helmet.

"Quick Attack!" Pidgeot dived at Marowak and knocked it over again before speeding away. Marowak climbed up a tree and leapt at Pidgeot, but it used Agility to escape and hit back with a Wing Attack. It used a few Gusts to drive Marowak out of the tree before driving sand in its eyes. Marowak tried to hit it with Bone Club, but missed. "Now, Mirror Move!" Pidgeot seized the club and struck Marowak between the eyes. It rolled over, fainted.

* * *

"Go Venomoth!"

"Go Butterfree!"

Butterfree kicked off by pouring Sleep Powder over Venomoth, rendering it unconscious. It unleashed a few Psybeams, which knocked it out before the trainer could throw his Awakening.

"Oh yeah? Go Pikachu!"

Pikachu used Agility first and then aimed a Thunderbolt at Butterfree. But Butterfree quickly emitted waves of Supersonic, confusing Pikachu and causing it to shock its trainer. Butterfree took this opportunity to use Confusion, then drifted above Pikachu to use its Stun Spore.

"Pikachu, Agility!" As Pikachu was still gathering speed, however, Butterfree was pounding it with Psybeam after Psybeam, knocking it out.

* * *

"Go Tangela!"

"Go Charmander!"

Charmander released a Flamethrower attack that knocked out Tangela.

"Go Cloyster!"

Cloyster opened up with a Tackle that was met by a burst of Ember flames. Not wanting to get hit, it rolled back and unleashed an Aurora Beam. Charmander was hit, but stayed in the fight. It launched a Fire Spin, and while that was happening, took the opportunity to deliver a Skull Bash. It wasn't very effective against Cloyster's rock hard shell and Charmander practically bounced off. Cloyster Leered at it and froze it solid with a few Ice Beams.

"Should've carried an Ice Heal," Ryan muttered as he returned Charmander.

* * *

"Go Goldeen!"

"Go Oddish!"

Goldeen opened up with a Horn Attack that just barely missed. Oddish released some Stun Spore and Acid, then jumped on top of Goldeen and began absorbing its energy. Goldeen retaliated with a Waterfall that had Oddish stunned for a moment. It rushed at Oddish again, but was partially paralyzed. Oddish slowed it down with Acid and absorbed the rest of its health.

"Go Blastoise!"

Blastoise unleashed a Hydro Pump that literally washed Oddish away. While it was still recovering, it rushed at it in a Skull Bash that blew Oddish sky-high. In response, Oddish unleashed a Petal Dance, distracting Blastoise as it launched a Solarbeam. However, Blastoise hung on and defeated Oddish with another Hydro Pump.

* * *

Mt. Moon was a very dark place, even at noon. Ryan was glad he had chosen Charmander as his first PokÃ¨mon. Without it, he would probably still be there, trying to find his way out.

"Okay, Charmander. I need you to light the way."

"Char char!" Charmander obediently traveled ahead.

There was nothing to do besides walk, and Ryan had plenty of time to think. Pidgeot and Butterfree, both at their final stage of evolution, often had no trouble winning battles. On the other hand, Charmander and Oddish seemed to be 'average' PokÃ¨mon. They weren't great fighters like Pidgeot and Butterfree, but they also had their own strengths.

Ryan knew full well that he was going to enter the PokÃ¨mon League next month and he wanted his PokÃ¨mon to be the best fighters ever. Sure, he had other PokÃ¨mon-Ninetales, Tangela, Machoke, Primeape,

and about ten other good fighters. But he knew that just being 'good' wasn't enough. You had to be the best in order to win.

The more he thought about it, the more he thought he should evolve Charmander and Oddish. After all, wouldn't Charmeleon and Gloom be better fighters than Charmander and Oddish? And wouldn't Charizard and Vileplume be even better? Of course, he wouldn't force them to evolve if they didn't want to. Pidgey, Caterpie, and all his other PokÃ¨mon, with the exception of one, had evolved voluntarily. And Poliwhirl had only evolved because it found a Water Stone in a swimming pool.

Ryan knew that he could always replace Charmander with Ninetales or Flareon and Oddish with Tangela, but he simply didn't want to. Besides, he'd promised them that they would enter the PokÃ¨mon League together.

In his mind, Ryan already had his team assembled. He would definitely use Pidgeot and Butterfree, as well as an electric, ground, fire, and plant type. If he could get his hands on a ghost or psychic, it would be even better. But right now, he just wanted Charmander and Oddish to be on his team.

* * *

"This is a PokÃ¨mon battle? Cool! You didn't tell me that!"

Ryan sat through the first part of the show still worrying about the PokÃ¨mon League. He remembered the time when he had decided to use only Charmander in Blaine's gym and just Oddish in the last. However, they were both knocked out somewhere in the middle and he had to replace them with Lapras and Vaporeon.

After the show, Daisy stepped up to the podium. "The prize for the winner is...a secret!" she announced. Several people looked annoyed.

The sister with the blue hair stepped up to the podium. "I have a list of twenty-six trainers who've, like, registered for the tournament, and we organized all of them into like, pairs to battle with each other. Not like the battles are fair, but we just, like, mixed them together because of, like, time constraints."

"What? You have to register beforehand in order to battle?" Ryan looked worried.

"Don't worry, I already registered for you," his mother reassured him.

"Really? Thanks, Mom!" Finally, this was his chance to get into a big battle and train for the PokÃ¨mon League!

Now, it was the redhead's turn to speak. "Okay, I'll be announcing the contestants. They'll be going one on one. "

The first two contestants were Fishermen who caught nothing but Magikarp. After an hour, they were sent into another room to battle it out. Next came a Metapod against a Kukuna. When it was finally Ryan's turn to battle, he was already half-asleep in his chair.

"Ryan and Peter," announced Daisy. (The other sisters were asleep because they snuck out in the middle of the Magikarp fight to listen to their new Jigglypuff CD.)

Ryan squeezed through the rows of chairs and walked down to the swimming pool, where mats had been set up. He didn't especially like battling in front of a crowd, but he was going to have to do it eventually, so why not now?

"Go Weepinbell!" yelled his opponent. He was a short boy with dark brown hair and big brown eyes.

Ryan's mind was racing, trying to come up with a PokÃ¨mon that was strong against grass. He couldn't send out Charmander or Ninetales because of all the water. Just then, he remembered that Weepinbell was part poison. But he couldn't send out a ground PokÃ¨mon either...

"Go...Poliwrath!" he finally yelled.

"Finally! An interesting battle!" Daisy clapped her hands together. "Hey, where did the others go?"

"Poliwrath, Hypnosis!" Ryan yelled. He knew that water attacks wouldn't be effective against a Weepinbell.

Weepinbell already looked half asleep, so Ryan couldn't be sure if the attack had worked. Meanwhile, the other trainer was getting worried. Was Weepinbell asleep yet?

Slowly, it closed its eyes. "Weepinbell, return!" Peter said. He was angry at the fact that Ryan beat him with one move.

"Okay, next we have..." The tournament continued. One by one, Ryan managed to defeat the trainers until there were only three left.

"And now for the big event!" Daisy announced. She glanced behind her, wondering where in the world her sisters were. "Joseph, John, Jimmy, and Ryan will have an all-out match." She turned to the four trainers. "You can use up to two PokÃ¨mon, but they have to fight one at a time. Now let out your PokÃ¨mon!"

Joseph chose Blastoise.

John chose Gyarados. A few terrified people ran out the door.

Jimmy chose Jolteon.

Ryan hesitated for a moment, then chose Oddish. Someone laughed.

"Ready...begin!"

"Gyarados, Dragon Rage!" John yelled.

Before he could do it, however, Jolteon let out a blast of Thunder that caused Gyarados to drop into the water, stunned. Meanwhile, Blastoise was using Hydro Pump on Gyarados.

"Hey, no fair!" John yelled. "Gyarados, fight back! Use Hyper Beam!"

Ryan didn't know what to do. Oddish looked just as confused as he was. Should he help Gyarados or not? He decided to let the other three battle it out. Maybe Oddish wouldn't have to face any of them.

A Hyper Beam slammed into Blastoise, weakening it considerably. Jolteon shocked it with a Thunderbolt. Blastoise went down and was replaced by a Gyarados!

The two Gyarados glared at each other, but it wasn't an attack. They started biting each other. Jolteon didn't want to interfere, so it turned to Oddish.

"Oddish, WATCH OUT!" Oddish rolled to the side just as Jolteon sent dozens of Pin Missiles in its direction. "Try a Petal Dance!" Ryan yelled. If Jolteon used Agility now, Oddish could never hit it with a Solarbeam!

A wave of petals flew towards Jolteon, who began using Pin Missiles to stop them. Hidden behind the flying petals, Oddish began charging up a Solarbeam.

Just then, the first Gyarados fell down and was replaced by an Electrode. Joseph's Gyarados decided not to stay around and went after Oddish, who was still charging up. Oddish tried to roll out of the way, but Gyarados batted it into the water with its tail.

Electrode saw a chance to take out both of them at once and rolled towards Gyarados. Jolteon, tired of the never-ending Petal Dance, used Thunder. The petals were fried to a crisp. One of the lightning bolts slammed into Electrode just as it reached Gyarados.

BOOM! Electrode exploded!

Oddish quickly dived underwater. Gyarados got the full blast and toppled into the water, unconscious.

"Joseph and John are out of the match!" Daisy announced, forgetting about her sisters. "Good job on training the Gyarados, though!"

Jolteon saw Oddish in the water and dived forward to deliver a Thunder attack. Just then, Oddish finished charging up and hit Jolteon with a huge Solarbeam! Jolteon skidded on the mats and fell on its side. As it was struggling to get up, Oddish ran over and used Stun Spore. Carefully, it began absorbing HP from Jolteon.

Jolteon was replaced by a Gyarados.

"Is it just me, or does every trainer now have a Gyarados?" Daisy wondered.

Ryan was wondering the same thing. What was up with all these Gyarados? Weren't they supposed to be hard to catch and even harder to train?

Suddenly, Oddish began to glow. It evolved...into Gloom!

"Gloom! Get it with your smell!" Ryan yelled. Gloom released a thick stream of disgusting odor, knocking Gyarados out.

"It just evolved. Yeah, that must be it," said Jimmy as he left the pool.

The crowd was cheering wildly. After making sure the smell was gone, Ryan leaped over to Gloom and gave it a big hug. "Oddish, you evolved! I can't believe it! You didn't have to, you know... I'm so proud of you!"

His mother rushed down to the edge of the pool. "Congratulations, honey!" she called.

Ryan turned to Daisy. "So what's the prize?" he asked.

Daisy suddenly remembered something and looked very cross about it. "They were supposed to bring it!" she yelled, dashing away. "I'll right back!"

Ryan stared after her, wondering why she was so angry. A few seconds later, he heard someone shriek, followed by a pounding on the wall. Pounding footsteps came in the direction Daisy went.

Finally, Daisy emerged, followed by her sisters, who looked as if they'd just gotten out of bed. They were holding something in a pillow in front of them.

"Here you go, Ryan!" Daisy announced proudly. "This Leaf Stone is the perfect prize, don't you think? Now you can evolve Gloom into Vileplume!"

Ryan was shocked. Not only did Daisy refrain from saying 'like' for three whole sentences, he now had the means to evolve Gloom! But did Gloom want to evolve? What if it was unhappy as a Vileplume? He quickly pushed that thought out of his mind and took the Leaf Stone.

"Thanks!" he said, admiring the pretty leaf pattern on the stone. "It's perfect! I'm sure Oddish would love it!"

Gloom tipped its head to one side, looking at Ryan quizzically. Why was he calling her an Oddish when she was already a Gloom? She hadn't meant to evolve; the charging Gyarados had scared her into it. At first, she thought evolution was a bad thing. She'd seen how other people's PokÃ¨mon disobeyed their trainers when they evolved and didn't want to be like them. Besides, she wanted to stay cute and not grow into some fierce monster.

But now... Being a Gloom was cool. She was bigger, stronger, and still had the same personality as before. She was proud of herself for defeating a Gyarados all by herself. There was nothing wrong with evolution; some PokÃ¨mon just let it go to their heads. Gloom was just as cute as Oddish! Plus, she was able to defend herself by using her smell. No other PokÃ¨mon could do that as well as she could!

Ryan let her walk with him as he left the Cerulean City Gym. She remembered Pidgeot and Butterfree-they were still nice to her, even after evolving twice! Butterfree hadn't been able to do much as a Metapod, but being a Gloom wasn't so bad. It made perfect sense to evolve into Vileplume!

Ryan headed towards the PokÃ¨mon Center. Gloom was put into a healing unit and given some potions. When she was fighting fit, Ryan picked her up and looked for more trainers to battle with. Gloom couldn't wait to tell Charmander the good news.

* * *

Gloom finished off a Vaporeon and plodded over to Charmander, who was taking a break. He wasn't getting the exercise he needed because Pewter City, Cerulean City, and Mt. Moon all filled with rock, ground, and water PokÃ¨mon.

"Don't worry, Ryan will be taking us to Viridian Forest tomorrow," Gloom reassured him.

"Viridian Forest is where kids from Pallet Town go," Charmander replied. "All it has is low level PokÃ¨mon. I won't much get experience from that!"

"He just wants to warm you up," Gloom insisted. "After that, we'll be going to Celadon City. It'll be much more challenging there."

"I beat Erika's grass PokÃ¨mon for him!" Charmander argued. "What makes him think I'm not strong enough?"

"Viridian Forest is closer," Gloom said, trying to make Charmander feel better.

"You evolved last week and now he thinks you're the best!" Charmander continued. "You're stronger than me, and I'm a fire type. How stupid is that?" Charmander looked back at Ryan. Pidgeot was pummeling a Sandslash.

"So? Evolution isn't everything. We've never battled before, so how do you know if I'm stronger or not?"

"Ryan's been training you, Pidgeot, and Butterfree a lot more than he's been training me," he pointed out. "How do you explain that?"

"Maybe he thinks you're strong enough already!" Gloom suggested.

Charmander shook his head. "Then why is he training me in Viridian Forest?"

"It's closer to Viridian City and he doesn't want to wear you out." Gloom looked uncomfortable.

Charmander looked back at Ryan again. Butterfree was finishing off a Venomoth.

"Should I evolve?" he asked suddenly.

Gloom was afraid this would happen. "If you're ready," she said carefully.

"Hey, how did you decide whether or not to evolve?"

"I didn't! Gyarados scared me and I just evolved!"

"How was it?"

"Well, it was kind of fun," Gloom admitted. "I got all these new powers and I'm still cute!"

"Do you think you'll evolve into Vileplume?"

If Gloom was human, she would have shrugged. "I don't know," she said. "Ryan says that I'm one of those PokÃ¨mon who stop learning attacks after reaching their final stage."

"Am I one of those PokÃ¨mon?" Charmander asked.

"No."

"Well, what do you think? Should I evolve or not?"

Gloom was just about to answer when Ryan called. "Hey, Gloom! Get over here!"

Relieved, Gloom left to battle a Golem.

* * *

"Charmander, come out! I need you to light the way!"

Charmander emerged happily. So Ryan had changed his mind about Viridian Forest after all! Next to Ryan was Gloom. Gloom never seemed to look gloomy. What was up with that name?

"He lets you out of your PokÃ¨ Ball all the time!" Charmander observed. The two PokÃ¨mon walked ahead. They were going through the Rock Tunnel. "Are you his favorite or something?"

Gloom thought about it for a second. Well, Ryan did seem abnormally happy about her 'decision' to evolve. "How would I know?" she said instead.

"You didn't answer my question back there," Charmander began.

"What question?" Gloom pretended not to remember.

"The one about evolution."

"Oh. That one." Gloom hesitated for a moment.

"Well, what's your answer?" Charmander demanded.

"I think you should decide for yourself," she said at last.

"But I can't!" he insisted. "That's why I'm asking you!"

"Why me? Why not Pidgeot or Butterfree or Ninetales or some other

PokÃ¨mon?"

"Because they're not usually out of their PokÃ¨ Balls like you are," Charmander pointed out. "Plus, they evolved because everyone else considered them weak." He stopped suddenly.

"What's the matter, Charmander?" Ryan asked.

Charmander started walking again. Ryan shrugged and followed them.

"Yeah, what is it?" pressed Gloom.

"If that was the reason they evolved, then maybe I should evolve too!"

Gloom thought about the PokÃ¨mon who didn't obey their trainers once they evolved.

"Are you going to keep on obeying Ryan?" Gloom asked.

"What are you talking about? Of course I will!" Just then, the meaning of it sank in. "Wait a minute. Are you telling me that my personality is going to change?"

"Not necessarily," Gloom replied. "If you don't let the strength go to your head, you should be fine. Just look at me, Pidgeot, and Butterfree!"

"I guess you're right."

Just then, an earth-shattering roar filled the tunnel. "An Onix!" Ryan yelled excitedly. "Okay, Gloom, get ready! I want to catch this one!" He lit a match. "Remember our strategy!"

Charmander sighed as he was returned to his PokÃ¨ Ball.

* * *

"We're here! Charmander, come out!"

Charmander popped out of his PokÃ¨ Ball and looked around in a daze. The sunlight was so bright! It took awhile for his eyes to adjust.

Gloom was already out enjoying the view. When she saw Charmander, she ran over to greet him.

"Hi Charmander! So, have you decided yet?"

"Decided on what?" Charmander asked, stalling for time.

"One whether or not you want to evolve!"

"Oh, that. Well... I don't know yet," he admitted.

Gloom started to say something.

"Charmander, Gloom!" Ryan called. "Let's get going!"

* * *

"You're coming back to battle me again?" Erika looked shocked. "Just how many Rainbow Badges do you need?"

"I'm not here to win a Rainbow Badge anymore," Ryan said. "I'm just here to train Charmander!"

Erika hesitated. "Do you like perfume?" she finally said.

"Well, um..."

"Gloom gloom!" Gloom nodded.

"Okay, as long as you don't set the gym on fire!" Erika laughed. "Just let me get my PokÃ¨mon."

The two trainers met again in a clearing inside the gym.

"Go Vileplume!"

"Vileplume?" Ryan was suddenly reminded of Gloom. Should he...? "Go Charmander!"

Charmander popped out of his PokÃ¨ Balls, ready to fight. "Char char!"

"Begin round one!" one of the girls announced.

"Vileplume, distract it with your Petal Dance!"

Vileplume tipped its huge head forward and a whirl of petals flew towards Charmander. Charmander destroyed the petals with one Flamethrower and started attacking Vileplume from a distance. Vileplume let out all sorts of powders from her huge petals, but Charmander managed to burn them all away. The battle was going nowhere.

"Charmander, give it a few Slashes!"

Charmander ran forward to swipe at Vileplume. Vileplume fell to one side, releasing some Stun Spore onto Charmander. Charmander tried to roll away, but he was paralyzed. Ryan threw him some Paralyze Heal.

With his energy restored, Charmander jumped out of reach and prepared for a Skull Bash. Vileplume tried to put him to sleep, but he rolled out of the way. All of a sudden, Charmander shot forward and hit Vileplume with the force of a bullet. Vileplume went down.

"My poor Vileplume!" Erika gasped. She returned it to its PokÃ¨ Ball and handed it to one of the girls standing nearby. "Take her to the PokÃ¨mon Center!"

Ryan waited, but nothing happened. His plan for taking Charmander to Erika's gym wasn't just to buff it up; he wanted it to evolve. After all, a Charizard would make a great addition to his team!

Erika turned to Ryan. "It's not over yet! Go Venusaur!"

"What? You have a Venusaur?" Ryan began to have doubts. He pushed them away.

"Don't you remember? I had a Bulbasaur! Why shouldn't it evolve?"

"Okay, Charmander! Give it your best shot!"

Charmander almost fell backwards at the sight of the giant PokÃ¨mon. He may be a fire type, but this PokÃ¨mon was huge!

"Don't worry Charmander, you can do it!" Ryan yelled.

"Let the battle begin!" one of the girls announced.

Charmander unleashed a huge Flamethrower. Venusaur was too slow to dodge it and started burning. Erika threw it a Burn Heal.

"Charmander, LOOK OUT!"

Charmander didn't see it coming; it was too busy dodging flaming leaves. A thick vine curled around Charmander's midsection and lifted it off the ground.

"Char!"

Charmander struggled, but Venusaur was too strong. It lifted Charmander up and slammed it into the ground.

Suddenly, Charmander glowed. Surprised, Venusaur dropped it. Charmander stopped glowing.

Venusaur threw Leech Seeds at it. They were gone with one Ember attack from Charmander's tail. Angry now, Venusaur shot razor sharp leaves at him. Those were also burned away.

"Venusaur, don't just stand there! Use your Solarbeam attack!"

The flower on Venusaur's back began to glow as it began to absorb a bar of light. Taking advantage of Venusaur's slowness, Charmander unleashed an enormous blast of fire. Venusaur was incinerated in seconds.

"I should start raising water types!" Erika yelled. She returned Venusaur and handed its PokÃ¨ Ball to a nearby girl.

"Do I get a Rainbow Badge?" Ryan joked.

"You said you weren't here for a badge!"

Meanwhile, Gloom was talking to Charmander.

"Did you change your mind about evolving?" she asked.

"Not at all!" Charmander replied. "I thought that the only way to defeat Venusaur was to evolve, just like you did. When Venusaur grabbed me, I started to evolve just because I didn't want to disappoint Ryan. Then I realized that I was happy as a Charmander."

"Let me get this straight," said Gloom. "You were scared into it just like me...but you didn't evolve? Why not? I was happy as an Oddish, too!"

"I'm still not sure whether or not I want to evolve," Charmander admitted. "You could say that I started glowing just to get Venusaur to drop me."

A pair of Oddish plodded by and started talking to them.

Ryan was still talking to Erika.

"After all this time, Charmander still hasn't evolved?" Erika asked.

"I guess it just doesn't want to. Or at least not right now."

"That's fine with me! By the way, are you going to give that Leaf Stone to that Gloom of yours?"

"Well, maybe." Ryan looked back at Charmander, Gloom, and the pair of Oddish. He pulled the Leaf Stone from his pocket and held it up. His eyes went from Gloom to the recovered Vileplume and back to Gloom again. "I just hope it doesn't go to her head," he replied.

End
file.